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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 001607

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SUBJECT: CANADIAN REACTIONS TO ETHIOPIAN POST-ELECTION PERIOD

REF: SECSTATE 99185

Classified By: POLMINCOUNS Brian Flora, reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

1. (C) POLMINCOUNS and POLOFF met May 27 with FAC Deputy Director for Southern and Eastern Africa Stephen Moran and Ethiopia Desk Officer Curtis Ajmani, to discuss post-election Ethiopia and Sudan. On Sudan, Moran mentioned that Canada has set up an interagency task force comprised of individuals from CIDA, DND, FAC, and 2 Senators that would be a kind of coordinating body for Canadian assistance and an advisory body for the PMO. The Task Force is located away from the FAC building, and is led by Ambassador Fowler. He said they were still not sure what precise form Canada's aid would take on the ground but noted that the AU force really needs vehicles, radios, even basic infantry equipment to boost their capabilities. Moran dismissed the recent public debate about whether or not Canada should engage with robust ground force as not particularly well informed. Their working scenario all along has been to support the AU troops on the ground logistically.

2. (C) Ajmani suggested that the basic issue with regards to the Ethiopian elections is that after a very good turnout, and reasonably fair balloting, all sides came out of the vote claiming victory. Canada applauds and supports efforts by the EU, US, and others to encourage dispute resolution through the Election Board, but has held off making public comments on the electoral process until the results are announced and it becomes clearer how the various parties conduct themselves. He understands there was to be re-voting in some places this past weekend and believes the vote is delayed in the Somali region until August. Almost all of the urban-based ministers lost their seats and much depends on whether or not the opposition receives 1/3 of the total seats, which would give them veto power over major legislation. To date statements by the government and the opposition parties have been relatively moderate, and the longer the quiet holds, the better the chances for a peaceful, democratic outcome.

3. (C) There is also concern with regards to how the inexperienced opposition will govern the cities it has won. As the June 8 date for the announcement of election results approaches, Moran said that Canada would support an extension of the mandate for the Carter Center and the EU election monitoring group. The foreign monitors and center have done a very good job to date of validating the process and their continued presence adds credibility to the process in the post-election period as alleged irregularities are sorted out. Ajmani said that Canada's Ambassador in Ethiopia is also in touch with the opposition and believes they would be susceptible to outside influence if it becomes necessary. They are not, he said, all politically naive, and he believes they are aware of Ethiopia's heavy reliance on foreign aid. Ethiopia continues to be a major recipient of Canadian aid, and is one of its strategic partners for aid. Canada was the fourth largest donor in the elections.

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